



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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4 March 2010

### EGY103421.E

Egypt: Whether people who have converted from Islam to Christianity, particularly those converts who have been arrested, are able to obtain passports and leave the country (2004 - March 2010)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

The *Daily News Egypt* states that passports are the sole official identity document in Egypt that do not require the possessors to state their religious affiliation; however, applicants for a passport must submit other official identity documents that indicate religious belonging in order to obtain a passport (31 Oct. 2007). The United States (US) *International Religious Freedom Report 2009* states that the Egyptian government continues to detain and harass citizens who have converted from Islam to Christianity, and also denies them civil documents, including national identity cards, birth certificates and marriage licenses (US 26 Oct. 2009, Sec. 2). The *Los Angeles Times* indicates that the Egyptian courts have made it almost impossible for Christians who converted from Islam to alter their religion on their national identity cards, and some converts have received death threats, forcing them to go into hiding or leave Egypt (7 Feb. 2010).

The American Center for Law & Justice (ACLJ), a Washington, DC-based advocacy group for the legal rights of Christians (ACLJ n.d.), provides details on the case of an Egyptian man who converted to Christianity from Islam in 1998 (ACLJ 25 Jan. 2010). The man reports that he was "tortured" by the Egyptian police and later "harassed" on several occasions (ibid.). The man and his family remain in hiding, have been denied passports and are unable to exit Egypt (ibid.). Christian Solidarity Worldwide, a Christian human rights organization based in Surrey, United Kingdom (UK) that promotes religious liberty, reports on the same case, indicating that the man was "tortured in detention" in 2002 after his conversion to Christianity from Islam, and has been unable to change the religious affiliation on his identity card (Sept. 2009, 10).

According to the US *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*, the Egyptian authorities frequently detain religious converts and charge them with the falsification of documents (US 26 Oct. 2009, Sec. 2). On 13 December 2008, Egyptian airport security officials arrested a Christian who had converted from Islam, as well as her family, while they were attempting to board a flight to Russia, and charged her with possessing a false identification document (ibid.). The convert told US officials that state security officials raped her repeatedly and subjected her to other abuse while she was detained (ibid.).

The *Daily News Egypt* states that a former Muslim who converted to Christianity initiated legal proceedings in the Cairo Administrative Court after he

and his daughter were denied permission to travel abroad (10 Nov. 2009). His lawyer stated that the man filed the lawsuit after he was refused permission to leave Egypt on 17 September 2009, and again on 22 September 2009 when airport security staff confiscated his passport (*Daily News Egypt* 10 Nov. 2009). The man stated to *Daily News Egypt* that he attempted to leave Egypt "because there is no place for me here anymore after the death threats I've been receiving and my inability to obtain my constitutional rights as an Egyptian citizen." (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

## References

American Center for Law & Justice (ACLJ). 25 January 2010. "ECLJ to UN - Egypt Must Recognize Christian Converts." <<http://www.aclj.org/TrialNotebook/read.aspx?ID=909>> [Accessed 23 Feb. 2010]

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Christian Solidarity Worldwide. September 2009. "Egypt: Religious Freedom Profile." <[dynamic.csw.org.uk/country.asp?s=id&urn=Egypt](http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/country.asp?s=id&urn=Egypt)> [Accessed 25 Feb. 2010]

*Daily News Egypt* [Cairo]. 10 November 2009. "Christian Convert Banned From Travel After Seeking Religious Asylum." (Factiva)

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*Los Angeles Times*. 7 February 2010. Jeffrey Fleishman. "Copts Fearful as Tension Rises in Egypt; Christians, Who Have Lived in Relative Peace with Muslims for Centuries, Face an Uncertain Future." (Factiva)

United States (US). 26 October 2009. Department of State. "Egypt." *International Religious Freedom Report 2009*. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127346.htm>> [Accessed 23 Feb. 2010]

## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) in Cairo did not respond to a request for information from the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sources, including:** Al Bawaba, Amnesty International (AI), Answering Islam, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR), European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Freedom House, Human Rights First, Human Rights Watch, International Christian Concern, Minority Rights Group International, Office of the

United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Refworld, United Nations (UN) Commission on International Religious Freedom.

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